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A FOUR-M DASH

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The title of this narrative is derived from the fact that it deals with a motor trip made by four men, all of whose names began with M, and whom we will thinly disguise, for this occasion, as Mandan, McAlley, and McGann. It might, with equal propriety, be called a five-M Dash, for the name of our car also began with M; we christened it the Maximin, because it gave us the maximum of pleasure with the minimum of cost and vexation.

All of us are what some careless writer, with a fine disregard of tautology, has called impecunious pedagogues. In spite of friends who predicted that, embarking as we were upon an enterprise which only millionaires ought to undertake, we were sure to go broke, we made a journey of over two thousand miles, with no important deviations from the route and the time schedule which we had drawn up prior to our departure. Leaving Detroit, July 18, 1908, we visited in succession Toronto, Montreal, Boston, New York, and Buffalo, which we reached August 23. The result was such a small decrease in the assets of the party and such a large addition to our knowledge of geography, our good humor, and our stock of health, that a brief account of our experiences may be of use to others who would like to try something of the sort, but who, for various reasons, hesitate.

We got across the Detroit River and away from the Canadian customs officials about 10 A. M. Saturday, July 18, after leaving ten cents with the ferry company and nine dollars in the treasury of King Edward.

Before we had issued from the streets of Windsor, we were attacked by several dogs, who persisted carelessly in getting in

front of the machine, so that there was danger not only to them, but to us as well. One little fellow, indeed, got such a bump that he went yelping down the street a sadder and in all probability a wiser Towser. We thereupon installed Mandan, who was once a university pitcher, upon the front seat, and gave him a supply of stones of various calibers. Being left-handed he could throw from this position without interfering with the driver. He made it a rule never to throw at a dog unless he was in danger of being run over, but he took an artist's pleasure in sending the foolishly hostile canine back to his own barnyard, there to nurse his wounds and meditate over his temerity. The accuracy of Mandan's aim was noteworthy; McGann kept a record of his achievements which showed 27 hits out of 30 shots, and made a picture of a dog on which he placed a cross showing the point at which the rock and the dog collided in each instance; ultimately, however, the picture disappeared under the multiplicity of crosses. Western Ontario, to quote Mandan's own phrase, proved to be the best dog belt; that is to say, he had more chances to throw at them in this section; the farther east we went the more cautious grew the game until, in the vicinity of Boston, it disappeared almost entirely.

After a rather discouraging effort to get lunch at Leamington, a town on Lake Erie, 35 miles from Windsor, we took the wrong road, and found ourselves, at two in the afternoon, on a clay dike about fifteen feet high and three feet wide at the top. For miles on all sides stretched a dismal swamp. A few drops of rain fell, creating gruesome visions of sliding off into this delectable morass. Not having a chance to turn around, we were forced, however, to proceed; and came finally to the shore of Lake Erie, where we found several pious-looking old gentlemen grinding sand. When we asked them to tell us the way, one of them, in slow, melancholy tones, replied: "You are the fifth auto party that has come over that there dike this week. The language of most of them was profane."

When we recovered the main road, which we did after a loss of 17 miles and two hours, we found ourselves on an excellent highway. Indeed, it continued so to London. At London we

left the main road and visited in succession St. Mary's, Stratford, Guelph, and Brampton, before reaching Toronto. In this region we found about 5 per cent. of good macadam, about 10 per cent. of fair gravel, and about 85 per cent. of unmitigated clay. Dundas Street, on which we entered Toronto, suggested the rocky road to Dublin. From Toronto to Kingston there is a turnpike which, once excellent, is still good. East of Kingston, except in a few places, the roads are unspeakably bad; the one idea of the builders of these atrocious creations seems to have been to heap up in the middle of the highway anything and everything that would cut a tire. In one place there was a half-mile covered with broken pieces of bricks, and we ran for miles and miles over sharp three-cornered stones. If such a thing is possible, Western Quebec is worse in this respect than Eastern Ontario. The entrance to Montreal from the west is, to put it mildly, discreditable to that municipality. There is neither a bridge nor an adequate ferry from the mainland to the island of Montreal. Instead you are rowed on a crazy flat-boat propelled by three avaricious Frenchmen to a little island called the Isle Pierrot. This should be rechristened the Isle des Pierres, for it is nothing but a heap of stones. If anybody ever undertakes to bring Dante's *Inferno* up to date and desires a fitting punishment for erring autoists, he will do well to represent them as being compelled through all eternity to cross and recross the Isle Pierrot. From the eastern side of this abominable islet a second scow and more avaricious Gauls carry you over to Ste. Anne, if you are lucky enough in the process of embarking to escape losing your auto in the river: From here a fairly good road leads to Montreal, but the exit from the city on the south is hard on tires and tempers. In Vermont, on the other hand, we found good roads almost everywhere; in Massachusetts they were uniformly excellent. New Hampshire appeared in this respect to be scarcely equal to Vermont, and Connecticut decidedly inferior to Massachusetts. The road from New York to Buffalo, by the way of Albany, is good, except in a few places; in two or three years, however, unless all signs fail, it will be possible to make nearly all of this journey on state roads.

East of Leamington we ran for many miles along the top of the high bluff which overlooks Lake Erie. At intervals the road crossed at right angles ditches, or arroyos, of huge dimensions. Originally dug a few feet deep to secure farm drainage, many of these, through natural erosion, have now grown big enough to be a serious problem for the farmer and the road commissioner as well as an interesting sight for the tourist.

Late in the afternoon we bought some gasoline. Though the retail price in Detroit had been only 15 cents a gallon, we found it to be 35 in Canada. The man who sold it informed us, however, by way of consolation, that he was giving us imperial gallons, which seemed, in his opinion, to possess some mysterious virtue not shared by the Yankee measure. I believe that the imperial gallon, as a matter of fact, is a little larger; at all events, the price of it is.

We were now about ten miles from Ridgetown; it was half-past six and Saturday night. One of our party confessed that he had a slight cold and a large thirst, whereupon another suddenly remembered that in Ontario there is no way to obtain the means of remedying these evils between seven on Saturday evening and seven on Monday morning. So we broke the speed laws and reached Ridgetown at 6:59, only to be informed that it was 7:59. We had forgotten that Windsor time is 60 minutes faster than Detroit time.

Though our faces were much burned and destined in a few days to peel until they resembled the surface of a retreaded tire that has outlived its usefulness, we ate and slept that night with keen satisfaction. And so it continued. We quarreled with no innkeeper, but no innkeeper profited much by feeding us. When we set out Mandan was just recovering from a severe illness, McGann was pale and nervous from overwork, and McAlley was so thin that, to quote his own words, he couldn't tell whether the pains he had were in his stomach or his spinal column. We returned with fresh faces, ruddy with health, full of that abounding vitality which is indispensable to him who would deal justly with the American boy or girl, and agreed that we had had the best vacation of our lives.

"When in Rome do as the Romans do." This ancient maxim, modernized by Mandan into "Be where you're at," we took as our guiding principle, and to its resolute application can be ascribed much of our pleasure. Good, bad, or indifferent, we took things as we found them.

Mandan, especially, extracted amusement from almost everything that happened. Shortly before we set out he had met, in Chicago, a learned German, who was attending the University of Chicago in order to perfect his knowledge of English. We had been only a few days on the road when Mandan conceived the brilliant idea of sending each day to "Heiny," as he called him, a picture post-card with a message written in German words and up-to-date American idioms. The compositions he thus produced, if they did not mystify the recipient, at least had the merit of amusing us. They also record, with sufficient picturesqueness, some of our experiences. For these reasons I here set down a few of them. "Wir sind noch nicht von den Koppen zusammen gedrungen worden." (We haven't yet been pinched by the cops.) "Gestern waren wir ganz darin." (Yesterday we were all in.) "Wenn wir andere schlechte Wege schlagen, alles wird mit uns hinab sein." (If we strike any more bad roads, it will be all off with us.) "Dieses Land ist die Grenze." (This country is the limit.) "Wir, schlagen nur die hohe Platze." (We hit only the high places.) "Wir gehen etwas." (We are going some.) "Die Einwohner wollen uns durchnassen, aber sie müssen diese Sammlung zeigen." (The natives are looking for a chance to soak us, but they've got to show this bunch.)

Usually the people were friendly. I can recall only two instances in which hostility was shown to us. One was in the outskirts of Cambridge, Mass., the other at Berlin, Ontario. In both cases the offenders were small boys, who threw stones at us, but, as their aim was less accurate than Mandan's, they did no damage. Mandan, who is a Harvard man, though visibly annoyed by the Cambridge incident, said nothing about it; at Berlin he expressed his displeasure by making a conundrum: "How does Berlin, Germany, differ from Berlin, Ontario?" Berlin, Germany, is on the Spree; Berlin, Ontario, is on the bum."

Of course we saw every day many things of uncommon interest. McAlley's camera was produced whenever material for a good picture presented itself, and while he took things the rest of us would lie luxuriously by the roadside discussing philosophy and contemplating the beauties of nature. Though Ontario has the reputation of being monotonously flat, it is so only when seen from a car window. The auto shows it to be full of lovely nooks and corners. Of these one remembers with especial pleasure the ponds and bridges and hills about Stratford; Lamp-ton Mills, just west of Toronto; the River Rouge, about 25 miles east of that city; the old forts along the St. Lawrence; and the panorama of rapids, ship canals, and lakes, as one journeys down that great river toward Montreal.

The scenery of Vermont in July, it goes without saying, is indescribably enticing. The contrast of the rich young green of the foliage with the flinty gray of the old rocks, presented as it is with endless variety of contour and enlivened by noisy brooks, removes the whole state, so to speak, from the realm of prose and makes of it, for me at least, what Sicily must have been for Theocritus and Ayrshire for Robert Burns. At all events, it caused a reckless consumption of films by Joe. Of all the spots in this land of rich beauty, that which most excited our enthusiasm was the gorge known as Williamstown Gulf. Here the road from Montpelier to the south leads through a pass only a few feet wide. It is dark with trees that grow thick on both sides, but when you issue from it you find yourself in a little upland valley, a kind of green bowl full of golden sunshine. At one end of this stands a mountain inn at which it is good to linger.

It was also good to linger at scores of beauty spots that presented themselves as we loafed across New Hampshire and Massachusetts, down the Connecticut, up the Hudson, through the Mohawk Valley, and so on to Buffalo. It is not good, however, to try to describe them, nor is it necessary; they are well known and the camera, anyhow, is mightier than the pen, except when it rains.

Unfortunately, it rained a good deal, and, our vacation days being numbered, we could not always wait for sunshine. So, as

mud and moisture seemed in no wise to affect the Maximin, we kept right on. Though I would gladly write at length concerning the performance of that admirable machine, I find that there is really nothing to say except that it was uniformly satisfactory. In our whole trip of over 2,000 miles we did not have even so much trouble as one flat tire and our other difficulties were on the same infinitesimal scale.

This happy result was due mainly, of course, to the structure of the machine. It is driven by two opposed horizontal cylinders of ten horse-power each, and weighs about 1,800 pounds. It is now possible to buy a thirty horse-power car with four cylinders for the same price that was charged for the Maximin, \$1,450.00; but, for a neophyte in motoring, I should still recommend the Maximin, because the cost of its maintenance is far less, and because its mechanism, being simpler, is less likely to get out of order. It will go as fast as it is safe or decent to go, and it will go anywhere that any car will go. Indeed, more than one chauffeur whom I have met on the road has said to me: "For touring I had much rather have that little car of yours than this big one."

Our freedom from trouble was due also in some measure, I believe, to the fact that we took care of the car ourselves. Each morning we oiled every bearing and inspected every nut from radiator to tail-lamp. At Prescott, Ont., we performed this function before the eyes of the owner of a big car en route from Montreal to Toronto by boat. When we had done he said: "Boys, that's the way to tour! That's the way to keep a car right! I don't know a thing about mine and my chauffeur costs me \$90.00 a month. He's so cursedly aristocratic that he won't touch any part of the machine except the wheel. Don't believe she's been oiled for a month! Wish I were going with you!"

On this particular morning we had had an experience with a Canadian steamboat company that deserves to be recorded for the benefit of future tourists. Being forewarned that the roads in this section were bad, we had inquired at their main office in Toronto how much it would cost to have the car taken by boat from Prescott to Montreal, and had been told that the charge

would be five dollars. The local agent at Prescott informed us that the rate was ten dollars, and when we appeared on the wharf the captain of the steamer demanded fifteen. Upon our expressing mild disapproval of this ascending and uncertain scale of prices and hinting that his company's methods seemed unbusinesslike, he answered that he did not carry autos as a matter of business but as a matter of favor. Whether this way of doing things is common to all Canadian corporations or not I cannot say, but I prefer the methods of the American company which furnishes transportation from Buffalo to Detroit. They charge a definite rate of nine dollars and treat the matter purely as a business transaction.

I have already hinted that the cost of the trip was reasonable. We kept an accurate account of our expenses, with the following result :

Gasoline	\$31.59
Oil	6.65
Garages and washing	15.50
Batteries	5.25
Permanent supplies (pliers, straps).....	5.35
Repairs and help (cleaning engine).....	23.03
Tire depreciation (2,000 miles at the rate of 2 cents a mile)	40.00
Ferries and tolls	5.21
Ontario license and bond	9.00
Hotels	205.98
<hr/>	
\$347.56	

The cost, exclusive of hotels, was therefore for each passenger \$35.39, or less than two cents a mile.

The conclusion from all this accumulated evidence is what I set out to prove, that if we, who were entirely without manual training or experience, could do these things so cheaply and pleasantly, the almost infinite delights of this truly royal method of spending a vacation are now within the reach of all prudent schoolmasters, or would be if they were adequately paid.